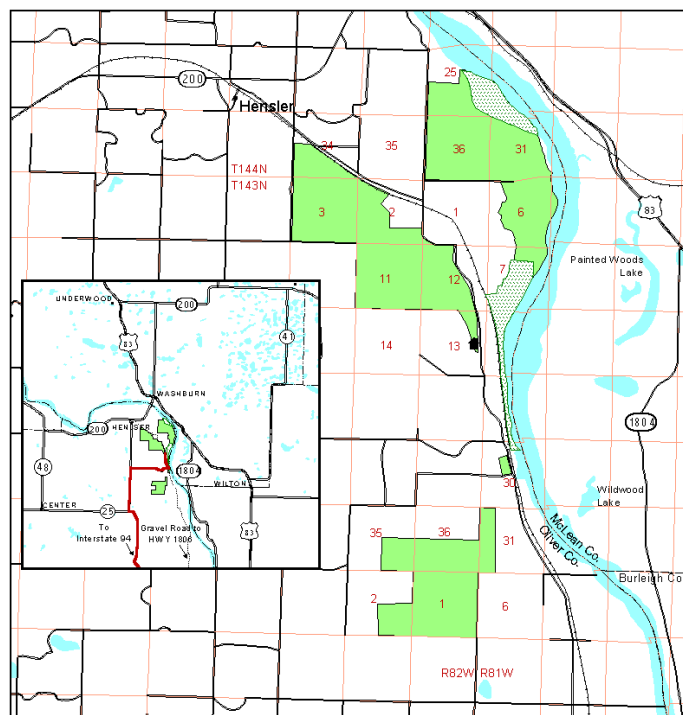
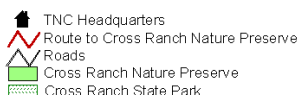


RECREATION & TRAILS

The preserve is open year-round to the public. Activities include hiking, bird-watching, canoeing, wildlife viewing, and cross-country skiing. The preserve and adjacent state park offer 15 miles of hiking trails. The adjacent state park has a visitor center, cabins, primitive camping, picnicking, and fishing.



Cross Ranch
Nature Preserve



LOCATION

From Hensler, 6 mi. SE; or from Mandan, west on I-94 to Hwy. 25, north 18.5 mi.; turn right (north) on Hensler road (County 4) 5 mi.; east 4.5 mi; north 1.5 mi. North to The Nature Conservancy headquarters.

CROSS RANCH NATURE PRESERVE



Near the banks of the Missouri River one can walk under towering cottonwoods trees, hear the screech of a red-tailed hawk, and see the flash of a deer disappearing amidst buffaloberry and catch the scent of horsemint and sage..

Cross Ranch Nature Preserve - The Nature Conservancy

HCR2 Box 150, Hensler, ND 58530

(701) 794-8741 fax: (701) 794-3544 <http://www.tnc.org/states/dakotas/>

For information on state preserves contact North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, 701-328-5357.

The ND Parks & Recreation Department's facilities, program & employment procedures are open to all, regardless of age, sex, race, color, disability, religion, national origin or political affiliation. Contact us prior to your visit if you need accommodation for a disability. For an alternative format of this publication (Braille, large print, audio, etc), contact: ND Parks & Recreation Department, 1835 Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58504, ph. (701) 328-5357, State TDD (701) 328-2001.

Cross Ranch State Nature Preserve

6,000 acres of rolling prairie & lush floodplain forest combine outstanding natural values with historic interest. Purple coneflowers, blazing star and prairie lilies push through the unbroken sod to sway among the little bluestem, wheatgrass, gramas and needlegrasses. This lushness harbors rare fauna, such as Dakota skipper, Baird's sparrow, and white-tailed and mule deer, badger, raccoon and coyote. Bald eagles winter here, and hawks hover the landscape eyeing the banquet below.

Oblivious to the activity over, under and around them, bison munch their range, as in pre-settlement times when the Great Plains was rejuvenated by grazing bison and wildfires. Today, fire brings desired results on this historic land where Teddy Roosevelt's Maltese Cross brand once identified the cattle that ran here. The preserve embraces more than 100 archeological sites, including Indian villages, eagle trapping pits and others dating back 8,000 years.

Inspiration comes easy from a hilltop in the rigged south unit of the preserve. The sweeping vista follows the rolling prairie through woody draws to the banks of the Missouri River where the largest tract of the state's remaining cottonwood forest is protected. In the canopied river bottomlands, up from the prairie and down the woody draws, the Conservancy has preserved a magnificent mix where diverse flora and fauna spin the web of life.

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL DIVERSITY FEATURES

Lowland Forest--Nowhere is there more convincing evidence of the influence of the river on the land than in its vegetation. Of the trees occurring on the floodplain, only cottonwood and willow are able to grow on the bare, newly deposited point bars. They are classic pioneer species; neither can germinate and grow within an established forest. The nature preserve contains the largest remaining tract of floodplain woodland on this free-flowing stretch of the Missouri, encompassing nearly 1,500 acres.



The vegetation of these forests varies between the open canopy of cottonwoods compared to the more closed canopy of elm and ash. Common shrubs and woody vines of elm and ash forests include buckbrush, poison ivy, chokecherry, Juneberry, woodbine and wild grape. Buffalobery, red osier dogwood and Wood's rose occur in cottonwood forests. Some species show a preference for a particular forest type. Field horsetails and wild licorice are common in cottonwood stands while you are liable to find Virginia wildrye, sedges, bedstraw and other species in stands of green ash and American elm.

Upland Prairie-- Wheat grasses, gramas, and needlegrasses blanket surrounding hillsides; tallgrass and trees thrive in the moist ravines. Throughout the summer months, the upland prairie is ablaze with hues from more than 100 species of flowers.



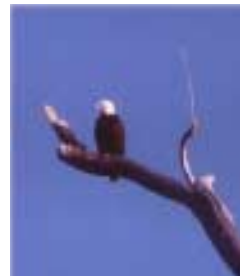
Wild Lily

Wildlife-- Wildlife abounds throughout the preserve, and is best spotted in early morning or at dusk. White-tailed and mule deer, badger, raccoon, and coyote still roam the preserve. Bison were reintroduced in 1986.

Over 100 species of birds have been recorded nesting and migrating through the preserve. Among these birds are two rare birds, Baird's sparrow and the Sprague's pipit, which nest in the uplands of the preserve. The federally listed bald eagle is also found nesting in the preserve and perched in cottonwoods along the river during the winter. The river sandbars provide habitat for Canada geese, migrating whooping cranes and nesting for the least tern. The whooping crane and the least tern are both on the endangered species list. Another bird one is likely to see on sandbars is the piping plover, a threatened species.

RARE SPECIES FOUND ON CROSS RANCH PRESERVE

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bald Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Wood-Pewee | <i>Contopus sordidulus</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sprague's Pipit | <i>Anthus spragueii</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-breasted Chat | <i>Icteria virens</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baird's Sparrow | <i>Ammodramus bairdii</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Otto Skipper | <i>Hesperia ottoe</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dakota Skipper | <i>Hesperia dacotae</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smooth Cliffbrake | <i>Pellaea glabella</i> |



Bald Eagle